

# THE GRAMOPHONE

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## EDITORIAL

**O**UR little venture has aroused more interest than we were prepared for, and we hardly realised the amount of organisation and correspondence it would involve. We became convinced of the necessity of a London Office, and this we have secured. I venture to hope that 25, Newman Street, will house us for a long time to come. This will be our only address in future, and I trust that we shall be coming out punctually on the first of every month.

I have to thank a great number of kind people for valuable suggestions and good wishes. We shall hope gradually to show our gratitude for the good wishes by adopting the suggestions. We have made an excellent beginning with our circulation ; but we want a large and solid body of annual subscribers. It will be some time before we can publish except at a loss, and as I am determined to make candour the feature of this review, we can only accept advertisers who have sufficient belief in their own wares not to want false flattery from us.

The bigger our circulation, the greater our power for good in the gramophone world. This is a truism of the flattest kind. But I do ask you enthusiasts for good music to help us by getting subscribers, because that is the way that you will get the music you want from the recording companies. It is useless for me to blaze away with blank cartridges. I want the leaden bullets of circulation to make my noise mean something every month. When you buy a record, tell your agent that you have bought that record because it was recommended in *THE GRAMOPHONE*. Make the agents read our review. It will do them a great deal of good and help both you and me. I cannot afford to spend more than a certain amount on this venture, but I will spend that amount willingly if we can only get a small portion of the music we want. So, please, do your best to get us subscribers, hammer away at the gramophone, music and news agents, and remember our new address :

25, NEWMAN STREET, LONDON, W. 1.  
Telephone : Museum 353.

I need scarcely add that we shall always be glad to welcome all enthusiasts who look us up.

By the way, my musical autobiography will have to miss a number, because I am hard at work on a book. I am trying to arrange that the September number shall include an exhaustive, and for my colleagues who make it, probably an exhausting, examination of all the leading instruments, soundboxes and needles now on the market.

*Compton Mackenzie*

# WILLIAM BYRD

By Rev. Edmund H. Fellowes, Mus.Doc.

IT has been well said that the commemoration of the tercentenary of the death of William Byrd has been unique, because it has represented a starting point in the knowledge of his music rather than a notable milestone reached in the course of a long-sustained reputation. It has, in fact, been the means of introducing to the larger public an entirely new name among great composers. Two decades ago not one Englishman in ten thousand knew the name of Byrd, but during the past month, both in London and the provinces, programmes made up of Byrd's music exclusively were drawing large audiences, not because it was the fashion of the moment, nor yet because a centenary celebration invariably exercises some magnetic influence and arouses public curiosity, but because Byrd's music, after having lain in almost complete neglect for three centuries, was in these latter days appealing to Englishmen throughout the country as a thing of rare beauty and force; and the crowds that assembled in cathedrals and concert rooms, in village churches and in remote country gardens, were profoundly stirred by it. The tercentenary of Byrd's death has come as a climax to the remarkable revival of taste for the music which Englishmen composed in the days of Queen Elizabeth; for Byrd was not alone—Morley, Dowland, Wilbye, Weelkes, Orlando Gibbons, and many other great names are among that company who placed England at the head of the musical nations of Europe at the close of the sixteenth century.

The Gramophone Company (H.M.V.) has played a notable part in this revival. Two years ago it produced three double-sided records of madrigals by Morley, Wilbye, Weelkes, Byrd, Gibbons, and Ford; and this was followed a year later by a second group of the same kind. These records were made by "The English Singers," who have achieved such notable success in this type of music in Berlin and

Prague as well as up and down their own country; and the records are of immense value, not only because they enable this delightful form of music to be heard in the remotest corners of the globe, but also because they provide singers and students with an admirable exposition of the true method of interpreting a madrigal. With splendid enterprise the Gramophone Company joined in the general effort to do justice to Byrd's memory this summer by publishing no less than eight double-sided records,

which represent in a very complete manner the many-sided character of the work of this most versatile musician; excerpts from the Masses, and the brilliant motet, *Exsurge Domine*, illustrate his Latin church music; and there are English anthems and an extract from his "Great" Service, besides a complete record of the English *Magnificat* from the "Short" Service, which should prove of much value to choir-masters in cathedrals as well as in parish churches. This group of records also includes such splendid madrigals as Byrd's *This sweet and merry month of May* and *Though Amaryllis dance in green*—an invaluable record for the instruction of madrigal singers, especially with reference to the more complex rhythmic devices which were so characteristic of Tudor music. Two



Dr. Fellowes

of these records deal with Byrd's virginal music, wonderfully played by Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse; while the String Fantasia, published originally in 1611, is completely given on another two-sided record.

No one who has a gramophone should be without these records, not only because their old-world character makes them peculiarly attractive, but because their music is as full of vitality to-day as it was three hundred years ago, and the passage of time has in no way impaired its marvellous power to delight the ordinary listener as well as the highly skilled musician.



# AT RANDOM

By Francis Brett Young

THE other day, when I told a friend that I had just imported a Vocalion into Italy, she replied, "I am so glad; this is the first symptom of human weakness I have seen in you." For myself, I had been thinking it a symptom of human sagacity; but her answer made me realise that if it had been suggested to me ten years ago that I would ever become the owner of a gramophone, I should have been indignant. For in those days I did not live on an island among jazzing mandolines; and also, in those days, the modern gramophone did not exist. This set me thinking of one of Stevenson's letters, in which he said that the only pleasures that a large income could buy were a yacht and a string-quartet. The yacht, indeed, is now more than ever a millionaire's luxury; but the string quartet, thanks to the gramophone, is within the reach of most of us. Or is it?

Not quite. At present, as the editor explained in his first number, our programme of chamber-music is limited to fifteen more or less complete pieces. More or less. That is the fly in our ointment. To myself, and many of their customers who are my friends, the policy of the manufacturers in this matter seems unintelligible, or, perhaps, unintelligent. Here is an example. I see that a new quartet of great excellence, the Lener of Buda Pesth, has recently made two records for the Columbia Company. With two double-sided discs they could have given us the four movements of a complete work of chamber-music. A string quartet, written in Sonata form, is obviously intended by its composer to be an organic whole: to extract a stray movement from it is equivalent to extracting a single chapter from a closely-woven story. What we get on these two records—the excellence of which my isolation has so far made it impossible to test—is four movements from four widely different works, and one of them, already duplicated, and brilliantly duplicated, by the Flonzaley quartet.<sup>1</sup> Which means, as the producers might realise, that if, and when, they publish the remaining movements of the four works concerned, the unfortunate consumer will have to juggle with the sides of a whole series of records, shuffling them into place like a hand of ungainly cards, before he can hear the works in their proper order.

When once this disability is corrected the producing companies cannot give us too much chamber-music, if only for the reason that their instruments, as they stand at present, are particularly fitted to deal with a moderate quantity of string tone. How

sadly they fail to represent the effects of massed strings<sup>2</sup> can be appreciated by anyone who plays through the available records of the Meistersingers Overture and listens for that broad sweep of strings in unison which, in the concert room, become so stirring.

The perfection already attained by the instrument in recording the tone of separate stringed instruments makes one even impatient of the piano's intrusion in such records as that of the Mozart E flat Trio or the Schumann Quintet. This defect, no doubt, will be mastered some day, but for the present the only instruments of the piano family that have reached verisimilitude are the sugary celeste, whose sweets can only be digested in moderation, and Mrs. Woodhouse's harpsichord. Even so these limitations need not trouble us. The literature of string chamber-music is a vast one, and I shall be surprised if, when once the producers treat it intelligently—as if it were composed of works and not of movements—the demand does not assure us a continual supply.

The reproduction of woodwind has already been improved enormously. The piccolo, it is true, can still outscreech the tuba; but such a record as that of Stravinsky's *Performing Mice*—I mean his *Firebird*—conducted by Beecham and produced by Columbia, is amazing in its accuracy; and the *cor anglais* in the prelude to the third act of *Tristan* (H.M.V. D. 542) preserves its authentic accents.

And this brings me to another reflection. A little time since I was asked to contribute to a symposium on a question raised in America by Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer: whether the cinematograph had not rendered the novel superfluous. The question seemed to me a silly one, for it disregarded one of the fundamental functions of the novelist, which is the achievement of verbal beauty, with all its suggestions, in prose. But it set me wondering whether the effects produced by the gramophone may not, in time, act as a sort of touchstone for the orchestration of musicians. The gramophone is already a great solvent of vocal production; it throws into glaring relief the least imperfections of timbre or irregularity of tone. Witness Mr. Mullings' rendering of the Forging Songs from *Siegfried* (Columbia). Now Mr. Mullings is a magnificent artist; I have heard him sing the Forging Songs<sup>3</sup> and have been thrilled by the force of his personality and his abundant energy. On the gramophone he is reduced to a harshness which might, indeed, accentuate the sub-human nature of Mime, but is entirely destructive of a heroic

memory. Compare with these the almost flawless beauty of the Galli-Curci records, which reveals the true meaning of the words *bel canto*. It is the same with orchestration. The composer who is fortunate enough to hear his own music recorded will probably be amazed by the ruthlessness with which the machine reveals confusions of orchestral colour. He will hear his music not in the exalted atmosphere of the concert hall but, so to speak, *in vitro*, and if he learn to use his modern orchestral colour with the clarity which emerges through the "gramophone test" from nearly every bar that Mozart ever wrote and without the mistiness and misuse of power that betrays itself in nearly every record of Wagner—even in such slender and lovely things as the *Siegfried Idyll*—he will have to thank the gramophone for much. I do not suggest that composers should write for the gramophone, but I do believe that the gramophone test is valuable, and that its use will make for greater purity of form and economy of material.

In one section of music the producing companies seem to me to have been negligent. We have already records of all the great operatic singers, but scarcely any of the great singers of *lieder*. For instance, Elena Gerhardt.<sup>4</sup> Quite apart from the importance of the *lied* as a musical form essential to education, producers might remember that when Elena Gerhardt comes to England she is capable of filling the Queen's Hall with enthusiasm as often as she sings. In sheer perfection of technique she has no living rival. It is true that the majority of great *lieder* demand the imperfect support—as things now are—of a piano accompaniment; but many of the masterpieces of Schubert, Strauss, Hugo Wolf, Brahms and Grieg have been scored

for orchestra by their composers. If we could hear Gerhardt sing Grieg's *Ein Schwann*, Strauss's *Morgen*, or the Five Songs that Wagner used as a sketchbook for *Tristan* we might dispense with a host of superfluous Shadow Songs, and *Una voces*, and *Un bel di vedremos*.

One more grumble, and this not so much against the producing companies as against their musical advisers. In the admirably recorded new Columbia version of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*,<sup>5</sup> I find I am frequently quoting Columbia, but that is the fault of their own excellence—the most exquisite effect of modulation in the already mutilated second movement: those inspired bars that begin at the twenty-seventh from the end of the work, have been cut. It is bad enough in any case to follow with a score the H.M.V. version of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*; but this is not only the unkindest cut of all but one which this admirer of the gramophone must hold to be mortal.

I hope that the free expression of opinion to which the editor of this paper has opened his pages will have the effect of eliminating blows of this kind.

Finally, a few suggestions. What about Mozart's *Kleine Nachtmusik*, Delius's *Brigg Fair*, Schönburg's *Verklärte nacht*, and the great Quintet from the *Meistersingers*?

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG.

1. The playing in both records of the movement from Dvorak's *Nigger Quartet* is so superlatively good, but so utterly different, that I do not endorse this particular complaint, though I am profoundly in agreement with Mr. Brett Young generally.

2. Mr. Brett Young must get the *Etudes Symphonique* of César Franck. (H.M.V. D. 697, D. 698). The fourth part has a glorious sweep of massed strings. It can be done.

3. Mr. Brett Young must buy the new record of Mr. Tudor Davies (H.M.V. D. 700), and one of my correspondents writes with enthusiasm of the Danish.

4. We have the new Vocalion records referred to elsewhere in this number, and the Germans have any amount waiting for the blessed day when Europe is free again.

5. The Vocalion is in my opinion the best mutilated version, but the Velvet Face people have just published a complete version.

EDITOR.

## LIST OF SELECTED RECORDS—III

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—D.649, D.650.—*The Symphony Orchestra*, conducted by Coates. *The Siegfried Idyll* (Wagner).

**COLUMBIA.**—L.1423.—*The Queen's Hall Orchestra*, conducted by Sir Henry Wood. *Le Chasseur Maudit* (César Franck).

**VOCALION.**—D.02020, D.02039.—*The London String Quartet*. Quartet, Op. 64, No. 3 (Haydn).

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—E.203.—*Violet Gordon Woodhouse* (Harpsichord). *Nobody's Gigge* (Farnaby): Three English Folk Dances.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—3-07937, 3-07938.—*Renée Chemet* (Violin). *Symphonie Espagnole* (Lalo).

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—3-07929.—*Heifetz* (Violin). *Symphonie Espagnole*. Fourth Movement (Lalo).

**COLUMBIA.**—7153.—*Casals* ('Cello). *Larghetto* from Quintet in D (Mozart).

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-033086.—*Galli-Curci* (Soprano). *Comme autre fois dans la nuit sombre* (Les Pêcheurs de Perles—Bizet).

**COLUMBIA.**—A. 5194.—*Boninsegna* (Soprano). *D'amor sull'ali rosée; Tacea la notte placida* (Il Trovatore—Verdi).

**VOCALION.**—B.3032.—*Roland Hayes* (Tenor). *Go Down Moses*.

**FONOTIPIA.**—69153, 69154.—*Stracciari* (Baritone). *O de' verd'anni miei; La vedremo, veglio audace* (Ernani—Verdi).

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-022011, 022223.—*Chaliapin* (Bass). *Death of Boris* (Boris Godounov—Moussorgsky).

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-054029.—*Aida, Caruso, Journet* (Soprano, Tenor, Bass). *Qual Voluttà Trascorrere* (I Lombardi—Verdi).



## REVIEW OF THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1923

IN my review of the first quarter of 1923 I had occasion to refer to a sudden dearth of orchestral and chamber-music in the Vocalion bulletins of that period. This reproach is removed by the issue of H. Waldo Warner's *Quartet in C Minor* (D.02088 and D.02092), the first two movements of Smetana's *Quartet in E Minor* (D.02097), a 10in. record of two of Frank Bridge's *Idylls*, and the final movements of César Franck's glorious sonata played by Miss Phyllis Allan and Miss Ethel Hobday. I only had an opportunity of playing the last-mentioned record once, when the interpretation made a great impression on me, and I am sorry to say that the disc has disappeared from my review shelves. Perhaps my colleague, Mr. J. Caskett, was so much pleased with it that he has literally devoured it, or it may be that he sat on it by accident and buried the fragments in the garden without daring to confess his crime. The disappearance is annoying, because I wanted to decide if it was better than the H.M.V. version played by Miss Marjorie Hayward and Miss Una Bourne (C.895 and C.898). Nobody who cares anything at all about music can possibly omit this sonata from his collection. The H.M.V. version will cost him three shillings less than the Vocalion, and I shall leave his taste to be ruled by his purse. I wish I could say that I have enjoyed either Mr. Warner's Quartet or Mr. Bridge's *Idylls*; but where they were not dull I found them trivial, and while the great granary of classic and chamber-music is still practically unwinnowed, I do not think that we ought to be fed with such chaff and chopped straw.

It is good news that we are to have the lovely Smetana *Quartet in E Minor* complete; but oh, the difference between that exhilarating allegro *a la polka* played by the London String Quartet and the Flonzaley (H.M.V. 08102). The Vocalion people proclaim that the second movement has a martial air giving one an impression of Bohemian student life. You know the difference between self-conscious Bohemia and genuine Bohemia; and that's precisely the difference between the two interpretations. I really hate having to play the dentist like this with the Vocalion gift-horse; but we do not want absolute Rosinantes. It is foolish to accuse the public of not supporting chamber-music, and try to entice them with what really is dull stuff. We want more Beethoven, more Schubert, more Brahms, more Schumann, more Mozart, more Haydn. We don't want their music because we are highbrows or eccentrics or gifted amateurs, but because we love music. We do not want music on the gramophone

that is scarcely more musical than the scratch itself, music the most exhilarating moments of which are less exhilarating than three good air bubbles on the record.

I have not yet finished all I have to say in this review about modern music, but I can give readers a rest by calling their attention to a new Flonzaley record (H.M.V. 08127) of the last movement from the third of Beethoven's exquisite set of five quartets grouped as Opus 18. The London String Quartet (Voc. D.02004 and D.02008) have already given us a more or less complete version of the quartet from which this movement is isolated, and in the name of Orpheus and his lute I entreat, I beseech, I implore the Cerberus, not of Hades but of Hayes, to let the Flonzaley Quartet emerge into the light of day with anyhow one whole composition of a great master. Why has that sentimental fox-terrier such an objection to complete works of chamber-music? Mr. Eugene Goossens and Mr. Lamond escaped his vigilance with the whole of the *Emperor Concerto* last year, and this very April Mr. Goossens eluded him with every single note of the *Brandenburg Concerto in G* (H.M.V. D.683-684). I am not going to say that with these records the problem of reproducing massed strings has been solved, but there is no doubt that they mark an advance. I might add that the melody on which the first two parts of the latter are built up is already popular as a solo for the violoncello and violin, when it is usually known as Bach's *Bourrée*. There used to be a particularly fine record of it in this form played by Casals. The fourth side of these two records is taken up with an entrancing performance of *The Air on the G string*. Thank you, Mr. Goossens!

Another welcome orchestral record from H.M.V. is Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* (D.690). Perfect recording, perfect conducting, and perfect playing of this most lovely overture earn my deepest gratitude. In June H.M.V. gave us the *Variations Symphoniques* of César Franck with Arthur De Greef at the piano, supported by the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra (D.697 and D.698). I have already played these twenty times, and with each new playing I find them more wonderful. They offer me great spiritual consolation, and of all that has been published for the gramophone this year I do not hesitate to say that these two records have given me the truest, and will give me the most lasting, pleasure. I wish it had not been necessary to cut so much of the earlier part, and I wish it

could have been recorded on the new Columbia wax. Much is lost if they are not played with the loudest needle, and although the scratch is not unduly in evidence, so exquisite is this music that I have never felt such bitterness against chemists for not being able to do what they ought to be able to do. If I were a despot, I would summon before me the leading chemists of the day; I would immure them in a completely equipped laboratory, and I would then give them two years to eliminate the scratch from gramophone records. The penalty for failure should be imprisonment for the term of their life in a cell lit by acetylene gas and covered with encaustic tiles. Here they should spend the rest of their unnatural lives, listening day and night to the strains of a cheap gramophone playing on a scratchy record *I'm for ever blowing bubbles*. Their food should be sent in to them from the Eustace Miles restaurant in Chandos Street; their lightest reading should be Freud, Jung and Ernest Jones; and doubtless, if I really were a despot, I should be able to devise all sorts of additional horrors, which in my present state of limited power I have neither space nor time to enumerate.

The Columbia Company has made a feature of modernity during these three months. We have been given Joaquin Turina's *Danzas Fantasticas*, by Sir Henry Wood and the New Queen's Hall Orchestra (L.1467 and 1468), Gustav Holst's *First Suite in E Flat*, by the Grenadier Guards' Band (3260 and 3261), and *Conversations*, by Arthur Bliss (L.1475 and 1476). The last two records include Anna Thursfield's rendering of *Madame Noy* by the same composer. Every one of these discs is splendidly recorded, and that is all the good I have to say of them. Well, not quite all, for the Holst suite does just prove that it's worth while for a composer to write his music deliberately for a band, instead of writing it for an orchestra and letting some musical hack transpose it for brass. *Madame Noy* is a piece of pretentious Strawberry Hill gothic. The words and music are stucco, and the singing sounds affected, but for that the composer is to blame, not the singer. I take the trouble to abuse this performance, because this is just the kind of rubbish that the poor public is jeered at for not appreciating. The sooner it is realised that these strenuous efforts to be original merely represent the superfluous bad taste of the moment, the better for English art. Now for Mr. Bliss's *Conversations*! I extract the following from the printed introduction: "It says much for the genius of the composer and for the beauty of the recorded reproductions that even without these descriptive suggestions the music itself conveys to the hearer just the subject whose title it bears." Does it? Bah!

I once went with a friend some years ago to see the first Futurist Exhibition of London. Standing in front of one picture, I said to him, "My dear

Dash, do you seriously mean to tell me that this picture we are looking at conveys in the very least a dog fight?" "Why, yes," he replied, "I think I see what the painter is trying to give us." "You do?" I replied, "then I have got you, for the catalogue labels that picture *A Woman Swimming*." Even if I could recognise Mr. Bliss's *Conversations in the Oxford Street Tube* as what it sets out to be, I should only reply that he is trying to do what music has no need to do. Walter Pater said somewhere that music is the highest art because in it matter and form are fused. But Walter Pater is out of fashion nowadays, a discredited aesthete, so I suppose his opinion ought not to be quoted. In *the Wood* is Wagner's *Forest Murmurs* all over again. Only Wagner happened to think of it first and do it a great deal better than Mr. Bliss. As for the cor anglais *Soliloquy*, an errand boy could make just as melodious a noise if he could play that instrument. *The Committee Meeting* is to me the least objectionable of these conversations; but if Mozart had chosen to label the *Molto Allegro* from his Quartet in G Major *Allegro in comitato*, it would have conveyed what Mr. Bliss is trying to convey every bit as clearly and a good deal more delightfully.

The hard fact of it is that this representational music is an impudent device by modern composers to disguise the poverty of their invention with the ingenuity of their orchestration, just as non-representational painting is a shameless attempt by modern painters to hide their laziness behind a mask of eccentricity. The *Danzas Fantasticas* of Turina (Col. L.1467 and 1468) are pleasant enough to listen to two or three times, but too sensational to give enduring pleasure. The *Children's Overture* (L.1471 and 1472) is, I suppose, a reprisal by the Columbia Company for the duplication of some of their recent orchestral records by H.M.V. It is more complete than the H.M.V. version (D.47) by two melodies and has the same orchestra and the same conductor. Whether these two extra melodies are worth such an expense of new wax I am not prepared to say, but the overture is a really delicious piece of work and the scratch is so slight that I cordially recommend these two records to those members of the public who can afford the necessary fifteen shillings to secure them. Before I finish with the Columbia orchestral and band records of this quarter, I ask my readers to note particularly a most delightful double-sided record at 5/6 with the *Caliph of Bagdad Overture* on one side and a *habanera* of Chabrier on the other (Col. 921). On this Mr. Goossens and the recorders are at their best, and the music itself is charming. I also want my readers to note *The Beggar's Opera* selection, certainly one of the best half-dozen band records I have ever played.

The Vocalion Company, with most commendable enterprise, has given us the first two movements of



Mr. McEwen's *Solway Symphony* (J.04041 and 04042). I shall defer expressing an opinion upon this work until it is complete. The first movement is called *Spring Tide* and the second *Moonlight*; but a fierce south-westerly gale is blowing all the time in the shape of a most ferocious scratch. Once more I call the attention of the Vocalion Company to this scratch of theirs, which by some unhappy chance is always at its worst in their dreamiest music.

The most conspicuous feature of the second quarter of this year is the aviary of soprano singing birds that the leading recording companies have released. Maria Jeritza, Dora Labbette, Doris Vane, Elena Gerhardt, Evelyn Scotney, Kathleen Destournel, Celys Beralta, and Selma Kurz have given us records of surpassing loveliness. I wish that Mme. Jeritza had not made her English *début* with the Lohengrin song (2-043045), which always reminds me of a hymn tune; but her voice seems to me so rich and beautiful that I await other records with interest. It is remarkable how much the gramophone accentuates the slightly throttled quality, perhaps not so much throttled as corked, of all Central European sopranos. You will notice it again in a most lovely piece of coloratura singing by Mdle. Kurz (H.M.V. 043181) from Goldmark's *Queen of Sheba*, and you will notice it most of all in the exquisite *lieder* with which Mme. Gerhardt, under the auspices of the Vocalion Company has enriched our libraries. I wonder if a more beautiful song than Schumann's *Walnut Tree* (Voc. C.01092) is recorded. I doubt it. And the other songs by Strauss (C.01093), Brahms (C.01094), and Grieg, not Greig as the Vocalion people prefer to spell him, (L.3055), are only a little less lovely. I hope the publication of these German and neutral *lieder* will reward the Vocalion Company for not pandering any longer to the accursed superstition that the English nation is unable to hear the German language without being seized on the spot with convulsions. I read in one of our contemporaries a sneer at the publication of Madame Gerhardt's records by the Vocalion Company, which made me blush as deep a red as the celebrity annexe of the H.M.V. catalogue for my unknown colleague's Boeotian taste.

The Vocalion Company is also responsible for the appearance for the first time on English records of Miss Evelyn Scotney. Miss Scotney has learnt something from Mme. Galli-Curci; but that she has been able to learn anything at all from such a *diva* is in itself a testimony to the quality of her voice. I am not going to say that her duet with Giacomo Rimini in *Rigoletto* (A.0194) is as good as the same duet sung by Galli-Curci and De Luca (H.M.V. 7-05411), because it certainly is not. Moreover, the H.M.V. record is half-a-crown cheaper, and as a baritone Rimini is not in the same

class with De Luca. You will suppose I imply that Miss Scotney is in the same class as Mme. Galli-Curci, which would be a bold statement. Well, I am not sure if she be not; but with all the goodwill in the world I am not prepared to commit myself until I have heard more records than *Caro Nome* (A.0191) and *Piangi, fanciulla* (A.0194). Titania's song from *Mignon* is sung by Señorita Celys Beralta (Voc. C.01090) in perfect style; her voice is what the Italians call *bianca*, and would be, I should hazard, incapable of expressing deep passion, but I may be wrong, and I must wait for other records to hear her again. It may be that she is enough of an artist to be able to give precisely the fairy-like quality that the song demands.

I was delighted with Miss Doris Vane's performance of *Orpheus and his Lute* and *The Willow* (Voc. K.05075). I do earnestly hope that the Vocalion Company will invite Miss Vane to leave ballads alone and give us some really good songs. She has beautiful diction and a voice as sweet and natural as the lark I hear in the sky while I am writing these words. I dread her appearance in the next Vocalion bulletin, singing slosh about sunbonnets and garden-gates. I do not care for Miss Labbette's voice as much as for Miss Vane's, but she gave me much pleasure in a jolly duet from *Veronique* and a harmless ballad called *John* (Col. D.1450). Perhaps Miss Labbette will also take off her sunbonnet and sing about human beings as far as possible removed from the close-ups of cinemas.

This ballad habit of the English is a national vice, to be classed with the betel-nut chewing of the Solomon Islanders. Dame Clara Butt is as much responsible as anybody for fostering it, and we seem able to produce watery tenors, adenoidish baritones, and flatulent basses by the score to propagate the vile habit. It lies with the public to stop it; the police are at present too much occupied with cocaine, street betting, and soliciting in the parks. I fancy that English men encourage the habit more than English women, and it takes a masculine nation like the English to indulge in such debased emotion. I am glad to see that Miss Destournel has not entirely succumbed to the vice, though I suppose after what I've said that I ought not to be too enthusiastic over Wallace and Balfe; but I never can resist their crinoline melodies, and in (Voc. R.6112) Miss Destournel is charming as she sings of scenes that are brightest and dreams that she dwelt in marble halls. She also gives an extremely good performance of *Voi lo sapete* from *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

The Vocalion has provided two splendid records from *Elijah* and *The Messiah* (K.05070 and K.05071), in which Mr. Hardy Williamson and Mr. Lewis James show that we have good tenors if we give them some music to sing. I also strongly recommend the various songs and selections from *Lilac Time*, which



are all admirably recorded, and for which the Vocalion Company deserves the greatest praise. On the other hand the Vocalion people deserve to be prosecuted by the N.S.P.C.C. for their record of the *Mother Goose Song Medley* (M.1134). I presume that the master has been imported from America. The sooner it is deported as a most undesirable alien, the better for our nurseries. Seriously, this is the kind of record that does real harm to the gramophone and justifies the scorn of our enemies.

Before I leave the songs and singers I ought to mention that Mme. Galli-Curci has given us *Un bel di vedremo* (H.M.V. 2-053208). This was a disappointment to me, for with her lovely voice at its loveliest I missed the peculiar poignancy of Mme. Destinn that makes her record (H.M.V. 2-053101) of this song the only one for me. Caruso gave us Pergolesi's *Nina* (H.M.V. 7-522234) with all and perhaps rather more than the song demands. Tudor Davies gave us *Adelaide* (H.M.V. D.696), as I never want to hear it sung again. Mme. Austral gave us English versions of Aida's *Ritorna, vincitor!* of which I could not distinguish a single word, and Ponchielli's *Suicidio*, of which I distinguished "Ah, suicide," which was printed on the record (H.M.V. D.695), and toward the end of the song "for all my yearning" twice over. Not that I crave to hear the words of what is one of the most tiresome songs ever written, and one that by some curious misfortune of mine second-rate sopranos always choose to sing whenever I go to a concert in Italy. I nearly committed *sopranocidio* by throwing a lemon squash at the last woman I heard sing it.

A superb record comes from Chaliapine (H.M.V. 2-022018), as good as any he has yet given us, of Pimen's Monologue from *Boris Godounov*; and the trio from *William Tell* with Martinelli, De Luca, and Mardones is magnificent. The recording of the Fleta record (7-63034) takes first prize for castanets on the gramophone, which usually sound like spillikins or Autumn leaves on the pavement, and the young tenor sings the jolly Spanish song with great verve. He cannot resist one long *sfumatura*, and *sfumatura* as masterly as his has peculiar charm; but *sfumatura*, like smoking, can be indulged in to excess. I have never cared for any performance of Mr. Norman Allin's until *The Midnight Review* (Col. 1474), but he certainly does get this song out well, and a thundering fine song it is by Glinka. On the other side is an execrable setting of *Blow, blow, thou Winter Wind*. The puff says that "Mr. Ketelby has succeeded in capturing the entire spirit of Shakespeare's words." Read "missing" for "capturing" and the puff may stand. Nevertheless, this record is really worth seven and six for *The Midnight Review* alone. The other side can be used for frightening cats. The baritone, Ugo Donarelli, to whom I referred in my last quarterly

review, has confirmed my opinion that he is not a first-class baritone. His voice is monotonous, his diction obscure, and his style commonplace. I have heard *O Sole mio* sung worse, but I have never heard it sung so dully (V.F. 1069). Perhaps our atrocious weather was to blame. The record is a Velvet Face, but the voice is plush. The complete version of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* (V.F. X.1214 and X. 1217) deserves the gratitude of all music lovers. I have yet to hear a perfect reproduction of the *Unfinished Symphony*. I fancy that there may be something in the orchestration which makes it ineffective on the gramophone, so that it often sounds curiously like an harmonium. Until it is better recorded, and recorded as completely, the Velvet Face version must be the standard one for buyers. Something is wrong with the recording of the *Tristan Prelude* and *Liebsteid* (V.F. X.1179) with Goossens conducting his own orchestra; the strings keep turning into clarinets in an annoying way. The H.M.V. version remains the best, although it possesses a scratch almost as fatal as the potion itself. The Velvet Face people have given us a jolly selection from *Bohème* (X.1200), played by the Palladium Octette. This is just the kind of combination that suits Puccini, and I much prefer it to more pretentious renderings. I should like our readers to make a note of the two small records of the *Prince Igor* ballet-music by the Scots Guards' Band. They are splendid.

Nothing very sensational has come along upon the piano. The best record is of Mr. Mark Hambourg's two charming pieces by old English composers and a Liszt Etude (H.M.V. D.692). The first time I tried the *Tenth Hungarian Rhapsody*, played by Paderevski (H.M.V. 05714), I thought that it was a really good record; but, alas, with each succeeding performance it becomes more tinny, and if I play it much more I shall be able to preserve tomatoes in it. I am sorry about this, because the master's performance is the very perfection of piano playing. Busoni never seems really to come off on the gramophone; perhaps he is too austere. However, I don't think that piano enthusiasts can afford to miss his record (L.1470), issued by the Columbia Company this quarter.

The best thing on the violin is Miss Menges' performance of Handel's *Sonata in D major* (H.M.V. E.279,280). This is a glorious piece of playing, recording and music. Heifetz gave us an exquisite rendering of Mozart's *Rondo in G major* (H.M.V. 3-07964), and Kreisler a delicious trifle of his own (H.M.V. 7976), but about as substantial as a crystallised violet on the outside of a chocolate. The Columbia people gave us a fine piece of violoncello recording (L.1477) by Mr. Squire. Before I bring this article to a close I must not forget to mention Mr. Goossens' exciting *Tam o' Shanter* (D.694) and a most beautiful record of Tito Schipa singing a



song from Bellini and another from Verdi's *Falstaff* that are both rare on records (Actuelle 10039).

Looking back on the quarter as a whole, I really must congratulate the great recording companies on their efforts to give the public good music, and if I have seemed here and there ungrateful in my criticism, it is often only because I am expressing a personal point of view about the music itself. I should like to lay stress once more on the wonderful surface that the Columbia Company has secured, and I invite the other companies to concentrate upon securing a surface equally good. And I would plead once more for a cessation of the policy of reprisals, in other words of the duplication of records. This confuses and exasperates the general public, as I happen to know from the mass of correspondence I have received warmly approving my remarks about this in the first number. I know that in many cases the vanity of the artist is more to be blamed than the competition of the recording companies, but that does not mend matters for the poor buyer.

We have not yet got on the gramophone one complete Mozart symphony, one complete Haydn symphony, or even one movement of a Brahms symphony. We have a negligible library of the great songs of the world. We have practically nothing but isolated movements of the great chamber music. Repetition may be the soul of wit, but it is the heel of Achilles in the gramophone world. For the sake of Orpheus and his lute give us the fourth symphony of Beethoven, the seventh symphony and the eighth symphony, before you give us two versions of *Don Juan*, or the Siegfried Idyll, or, as we go to press, of Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite*. And now, having invoked the recording companies, I beg you, my readers, whatever else you buy, to beg, borrow, or steal the necessary 15/- to get César Franck's *Variations Symphoniques*. Don't forget what the Koran says: "Let him that hath two loaves sell one and buy anemones, for bread is the food of the body, but flowers are the food of the soul." Z.

## A DEFENCE of the GRAMOPHONE

By Frank Swinnerton

**A**LTHOUGH the majority of those who read this journal are probably gramophone enthusiasts, it is conceivable that the paper may be picked up from the bookstall by some who still have a prejudice against the gramophone. It is in the first place for these that I write. Many of them, of course, will never be able to enjoy mechanically reproduced music, because of some quality in the tone which jars a sensibility or sets nerves upon edge. It does no good to pretend that the fact is otherwise, because it can be demonstrated. My cat is like this. He may be superbly happy in the middle of a sumptuous meal; but as soon as he hears a record in action he leaves the house. He is an "irreconcilable." He is made depressed, suspicious, and physically uncomfortable by this peculiar quality in the noise. So are many human beings. They are not necessarily the most musical; they are merely the most sensitive. They are like ornaments which jangle at a particular note in the scale. It is impossible to do anything with them in this matter, since the *timbre* of the gramophone is unmistakable and a problem for the inventor.

But there are others who are potential users of the gramophone and who do not know it. They are innumerable. There are those who once heard a blaring machine in the earliest days of the invention, or who more recently have shuddered at the passing bray of a cottage instrument with cheap records and oft-used needles. These people think wretchedly of the gramophone. To them it is an infernal

machine which makes all music sound as if it were being played by nursery soldiers. They decry it. They do so in ignorance; and they should all be good material for the gramophone companies. It is worth while to convert as many as possible of such potential users, because every convert increases the prospects of further improvement in reproduction and an extended range of records. And the indignant gramophone enthusiast—annoyed at the insults of these opinionated ignoramuses—must remember that instruments and records have improved very much indeed within the past few years. That is a point which must not be forgotten. It is full of promise for the future.

When I have to deal with people of the kind I have just described, I play them very few pieces of music, and these very carefully chosen. For it must be admitted that in a quiet room, except in the case of the very latest records, the soft noise of a steel needle is always to be heard by those who are listening for it. A crackle, for those who await it, will be thunderous. Every defect will be first remarked, because it is easier to find faults than to acclaim virtues. Once aroused, prejudice is overwhelming. The confirmed gramophone-user does not hear the needle, although he may shiver at the crackle; but the novice at first hears nothing else. He is like a person who goes to the theatre for the first time when he is of an age to decry nothing but its artificiality. Everything that makes a play enjoyable is disturbed by his sense of the mechanism of

the stage and of the drama. And just as Coleridge said that to appreciate the theatre one must *withhold* certain faculties, so, in listening to the gramophone, must one be prepared to make allowances for unfamiliar features of the performance. One must not assume that all that is unfamiliar is necessarily defective. On the contrary. Some hearers, for example, cannot bear to hear a remarkably life-like human voice issuing from a box. Their attitude is similar to the attitude of aborigines in comparable circumstances; they are filled with awe, with horror. Could they but know, it is often preferable to hear without seeing. To some of us, the darkening of concert-rooms in England is an ideal. But they do not know. They desire the physical presence. For want of it, the gramophone distresses them.

And it must be admitted that the gramophone is not yet perfect. The story of Edison spending a disheartening hour in trying to make a machine say "sugar" is familiar. The gramophone cannot yet reproduce the letter "S." It cannot yet render satisfactorily the full volume of an orchestra or the pure tone of the pianoforte. Always the orchestra has a tinny vibration—a dwarfing of the original; nearly always the piano has many notes—particularly loud notes—resembling the banjo. Pang, pang, pang . . . Strings are still the most satisfactory instruments for mechanical reproduction. And finally, what to me is the gravest defect of all (since I am little disturbed by details of the mechanism, so long as I love the music), the regulation size of the 12-inch disc imposes restrictions upon the piece of music which is to be reproduced. Too often, far too often, the music has been ruthlessly cut.

These, I say, are some of the defects of the gramophone at the present moment. These defects will almost certainly be diminished in the near future. They are already less than they were a few years ago. The comparative noiselessness of the needles upon the records, the reduction of "crackle," the elimination of blare and bray, provided care is taken with needles, are all signs of incessant search for improvement. Even within my recollection, which is comparatively short, the gramophone has made great advances; and it will be better yet. Listening to a gramophone used to be an irksome business. One shrank from the stentorian ugliness of noise. Nowadays, however, it is possible to be altogether absorbed in a fine piece of music which is being performed by means of the gramophone—to be moved by it and absorbed in it as one would be in the concert-hall. Indeed, I will go further. The gramophone can be played without distraction of any kind—where and when one pleases. In a silent room so lighted (or darkened) that one is at ease, I can imagine little to prevent the performance of the *Andante Con Moto* of Schubert's *Quartet in D Minor*—as it is now given by the Lener Quartet—from

being practically perfect. Here the strings are beautifully reproduced, the playing is superb, and the needle is almost noiseless.

Leaving aside the fact that the gramophone has for the first time made bearable English country life in the winter months, I would urge another important consideration. There seems no doubt that it is possible to learn a great deal about music as the most wonderful of the arts through the possession of a gramophone. For one thing, if one likes a piece of music—and I cannot imagine anything very much finer, for example, than Mozart's *Quintet in G. Minor*, which has been admirably recorded—the gramophone owner can play it over and over again until he learns it thoroughly. There is nothing to prevent constant repetition, except his own distaste, which will be significant. With the gramophone as his instrument he learns it as he never could do with the otherwise available facilities. He learns it in some degree as a musician would do, as the conductor of an orchestra learns the music as a whole. He waits for favourite parts of the record, and by being familiar with these he realises why he likes them, and what he at heart demands from music. When he hears the music played in public, by a flesh-and-blood soloist or quartet or orchestra, he appreciates it better, and remarks variations in emphasis or tempo which are of the utmost importance in the emotional understanding of the composer's purpose. He begins, in fact, to comprehend music, which hitherto has been a mystery to him. It is like a language which he hears in the land to which it is native—at first strange and incomprehensible, but now at last the most delicious and communicative language in the world. And this, to my mind, is wholly the outcome of the fact that he can hear *whenever he wants to do so*, properly played or properly sung, the best music that has ever been written. It is a tremendous advantage.

Further to this matter. The musical enthusiast is sometimes misled, as are enthusiasts of every kind, into thinking a song or a sonata or a mere *piece d'occasion* is better than in fact it is. He has a sudden admiration. The only way in which he can test his judgment is by means of repetition. Any piece of music that is less than the best stales after a few repetitions; but the best by familiarity is made better. And the gramophone enables the listener to distinguish between what is best as music and what is best only as material for the virtuoso. It enables him to discover the music he really likes, and the music that stimulates him and awakens his emotion, and the music that is entertaining, and the music he cannot bear, and the music he only tolerates because it is well sung or played. It enables him to face the fact that for years he has *thought* he liked music which he finds at last he has been only pretending to like. Who would be without a gramophone? Not I, certainly.





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# GRAMOPHONE SOCIETIES' REPORTS

## THE SOUTH EAST LONDON (RECORDED) MUSIC SOCIETY

THE June meeting was one of the most successful we have had for a considerable time, and it was one in which not a moment was wasted. The first part of the evening was devoted to the main programme, which consisted of Excerpts from Opera in English. Our president, Mr. Lewis, occupied the chair, and from his wonderful store of operatic knowledge gave us some very interesting information concerning each item. Italian, French, German and English Operas were touched upon, but it is very difficult to single out any particular item in such a brilliant programme. I feel I must mention the famous *The Yeomen of England*, from German's *Merrie England*, which was sung with gusto by the late William Samuël. It was great, and the pity is, that we have so few recordings of such a rich baritone voice. The rendering of the *Prize Song*, from *The Mastersingers*, by Frank Mullings, was excellent; it is undoubtedly the finest rendering in English that has yet been recorded. I am tempted to dwell on each item, but space will not permit. Sufficient to say that music-lovers not with us missed a veritable treat.

Following the main programme, a few announcements were made concerning innovations, which will prove particularly interesting to both old and new members; one which evoked considerable enthusiasm and applause was that of a gift to the society of twelve Velvet Face records, by Messrs. J. E. Hough, Ltd., the makers. When some of these were demonstrated, more enthusiasm was evinced, as they were so fine; in our opinion V.F. records are worthy of a place in anyone's collection, and Messrs. Hough are to be congratulated. This means a substantial addition to our Record Lending Library, from which all members benefit.

Following the interval, a general meeting was held for the purpose of electing a secretary and a treasurer in place of Mr. King, who, hitherto, has carried on the duties of both with such energy, and who now finds himself unable to spare the time to continue. Mr. W. G. Davies was elected to the office of treasurer, and the undersigned to that of secretary. Will anyone interested in our society please send a stamped addressed envelope to 42, Chalsey Road, Brockley, S.E. 4, and I shall be delighted to send full details. Our next concert takes place on July 9th, and is to be devoted mainly to Wagner.

A very successful Concert was held on Monday, July 9th, and we were gratified to see several old friends with us. Such is the appeal of Wagner that although we have on at least two previous evenings given concerts devoted to his music, our members have voted for another. Can it be wondered at when one considers how unique the master's work is? It covers the whole gamut of musical emotion; it has such amazing descriptive power and is so full of pure musical beauties. We have the music of the sea, of fire, the air, love, life, and death—all painted by a master-hand upon an immense canvas. When a great orchestra gets to work on "The Ring" for instance, what enchanting beauty is unfolded. A wonderful world of mythology musically illustrated is opened up to us and a short evening's programme can only whet the appetite and increase our desire to worship more often at the shrine of that genius who is for some people the greatest musician of all time and whose fame is secure for ever.

Under the very able direction of our Vice-President, Mr. Ed. C. Coxall we listened to the Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, with such conductors as Sir Landon Ronald, Mr. Albert Coates and Mr. Eugene Goossens, such vocalists as Miss Florence Austral, Mr. Tudor Davies, Mr. Frank Mullings and Mr. Robert Radford, nothing was left to be desired. We heard how vivid and dramatically expressive were the famous themes with their amazing variety of treatment. "Rienzi," "The Mastersingers," "Lohengrin" and "The Ring" all held our attention with rapture and we look forward yet to more.

Since my last report we have received further gifts to our record lending library. Three more albums were put into circulation consisting of one dozen Columbia, one dozen Homochord, and one dozen Pathé Actuelles. This makes an addition

of 48 in just over a month, and we hope to add still further in the near future.

I want to make a special appeal to music-lovers in South London to pay us an early visit—there must be hundreds who are missing our monthly concerts and the many benefits open to our members. A line to me at 42, Chalsey Road, Brockley, will bring details of our Society and for those who would prefer to drop in at one of our concerts I would mention the next two fixtures are: August 18th, "Early English Compositions"; September 10th, "Cavalleria Rusticana" complete. At the Central Hall (Minor Hall), Peckham, sharp at 8 p.m., please.

ERNEST BAKER, *Hon. Secretary.*

## FULHAM GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, June 13th, was another "Ladies' Night," Miss D. Ambridge giving the first programme. Amongst other good items were 1812 *Overture* (Grenadiers), *Annie Laurie* (Muriel Brunskill), *Rustle of Spring* (Marjorie Hayward), *Oh, for the wings of a dove* (Melba), *Evening Whispers* (Tyrer-Piano), *Ombra mai fu* (Caruso), *Petite Suite de Concert* (Coldstreams), *Phantom Melody* (Jean Schwiller), and *William Tell* (Life Guards). After the interval, Miss A. Cutler continued with *Raymond Overture* (Life Guards), *Far across the desert Sands* (Edgar Coyle), *Gems from Trovatore* (Grand Opera Company), *The Gipsy warned me* (Violet Lorraine), *Kermesse Scene—Faust* (L. Wind Quin), *Cello Turchino* (Caruso), *Io Son Titania* (Galli-Curci), *Casey's Charabanc* (Talbot O'Farrell), *Just because the violets* (Kennedy Russell), *Hungarian Rhapsody* (Marie Novello), and, last, a record that carried this scribe's thoughts back an uncomfortable way, *My Old Dutch* (Albert Chevalier)—and a perfect rendering, too! Shades of my youthful days, what a wonderful thing a gramophone record can be!

During the evening Mr. Bozon, a member of the society, demonstrated his own patent tortoiseshell diaphragm, as also did Mr. Tracy his patent "Vitatone" diaphragm. The society is most fortunate in having two experts and diaphragm inventors amongst its members. During the first eight items of Miss Cutler's programme, a "Sonore" sound-box—the property of Mr. Edwards—was in use. I have never heard of this box before, but it is, undoubtedly, a very fine box; it brought Galli-Curci absolutely "into the hall."

Throughout the evening, Mrs. Desmonde officiated as "chairman," and carried out her duties in a manner both pleasing and satisfying. Mere man, from president to last-joined member, sat back and held tight, and the ladies did it all. And a very good "all," too. Long live the ladies!

JACK ST. CLAIR-DESMONDE, *Hon. Secretary.*

## THE WEST LONDON GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

THE first annual general meeting of the above Society took place on Wednesday evening, July 11th, at the Holy Cross Schools, Ashington Road.

The business of the evening opened with a thorough "overhauling" of the Society's rules, by which many anomalies were removed and suggestions for the betterment of the Society carried, the principal alteration being the changing of the title from the Fulham to the West London Gramophone Society. By this change it is hoped to increase the membership in West London. Meetings will in future be held on the second Wednesday in each month, with additional meetings at the discretion of the committee. The report of the secretary, Mr. Desmonde, on the previous year was very satisfactory from all standpoints, more particularly as this is the society's first year of existence.

The unanimity in the election of new officials for the coming year was pleasing, Mr. Friend being once more our president; Mr. Simmonds becomes vice-president; Mr. Desmonde, chairman; Mr. F. S. Tanner, secretary; Mr. Edwards, vice-chairman and recording secretary, while the committee consists of Mesdames Ambridge, Cutler and Desmonde and Messrs. N. C. Tanner and Kay.



A vote of thanks was passed to the late management for their services and a hearty vote of thanks to the late secretary, Mr. Desmonde (who now becomes our chairman) for the very efficient way he has carried out his duties during the past year.

After the interval, which has been considerably shortened to permit of a longer digestion of records and a shorter digestion of coffee, etc., a demonstration was given by Mr. F. L. Cammack. Special mention must be made of a Columbia record of Saint Saëns' *Le Cygne*, played by W. H. Squire ('cello), also two Columbia records by the New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra, *Where the Rainbow Ends* and *The Children's Overture* (Quilter). Mr. Cammack also gave us several records (H.M.V.) by Caruso and Galli-Curci, Chaliapin singing *The Two Grenadiers* (Schumann), a duet by Galli-Curci and De Luca *Dile alla giovine* (Verdi), these with other records going to qualify our chairman's statement "a very high-class programme."

New members will be welcomed to the Society and full particulars can be obtained from the Hon. Sec., Mr. F. S. Tanner, 49, Estcourt Road, S.W. 6.

W. H. E.

## THE SOUTH LONDON GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

A SPECIAL programme provided by members of the committee was given on June 16th to an appreciative audience. The items were: *Carmen* (Zonophone), Black Diamonds Band; *Le Sevillana* (H.M.V.), Gorgoza; *Solveig's Song* (Col.), Dora Labette; *Souvenir* (H.M.V.), Elman; *Agnus dei* (H.M.V.), Schumann Heink; *Ah, Stay Turiddu* (Col.), Stralia and Mullings; *Molly on the Shore* (H.M.V.), Albert Hall Orchestra; *Come rugiado al cespite* (H.M.V.), Martinelli; *Edward* (Col.), Norman Allin; *Andante con moto* (Col.), Lener Quartette; *Merrie England* (Zono.), Black Diamonds Band; *Santa Lucia luntuna* (H.M.V.), Gigli; *Deh vieni non tardar* (Voc.), Destournal; *O soave fanciulla* (H.M.V.), Gigli and Zamboni; *La Source* (H.M.V.), Mayfair Orchestra; *Gustav Holst's First Suite in E*, three parts (Col.), Grenadier Guards; *Largo al factotum* (Col.), Stracciari; *Selling a Car* (Col.), Harry Tate; *Flower Song* (Col.), McCormack; *Etude de Concert* (H.M.V.), Hambourg; *Prelude and Duke's Song* (Col.), Taccani; *Piangi, Piangi, Fanciulla* (H.M.V.), Galli-Curci and De Luca; *Love in Arcady* (H.M.V.), Cedric Sharpe; *Non Pui Andrai* (Voc.), Eric Marshall; *Elegie* (H.M.V.), Gluck and Zimbalist; *O Sole Mio* (H.M.V.), Gorgoza; *In a Monastery Garden* (Col.), Court Symphony Orchestra.

The programmes for our ordinary meeting on June 30th, were as below:

Mr. PARSONS: *Le Tango du Reve* (Homo.), Ilescu; *Angel's Serenade* (F.V.), Brola; *Valse Brillante* (Homo.), G. Meller; *The Caretaker* (Col.), Bransby Williams; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, (V.F.), British Symphony Orchestra; *O Divine Redeemer* (V.F.), Jessie Broughton; *The Two Grenadiers* (Zono.), Peter Dawson; *Angels Guard Thee* (V.F.), Brola; *Indian Lament* (Col.), Seidel.

Mr. BROCKWAY: *Carmen-Prelude* (H.M.V.), Albert Hall Orchestra; *Caprice Viennois* (H.M.V.), Kriesler; *Il dolce suono* (H.M.V.), Galli-Curci; *Andante from G Major Quartette* (H.M.V.), Elman String Quartette; *The King's Minstrel* (Voc.), McEachern; *Sarabande in D* (H.M.V.), B. Harrison; *Nocturne in F Major* (H.M.V.), de Greef; *Coppelia* (Col.), London Symphony Orchestra; *Rondino* (H.M.V.), Kreisler.

Mr. HARDISTY: *Der Kleine Sandmann bin ich* (H.M.V.), Gluck and Homer; *Andante from Quartet in D Major* (H.M.V.), Flonzaley Quartette; *Credo in un Dio crudel* (H.M.V.), Amato; *La ronde des Lutins* (H.M.V.), Lamond; *Come per me sereno* (H.M.V.), Galli-Curci; *Largo al factotum* (H.M.V.), Gorgoza; *Chanson Indoue* (Col.), Bratza; *Rondino* (Col.) Bratza; *Bella Figlia dell'Amore* (H.M.V.), McCormack, Bori, Jacoby and Warrenrath; *Aida—Final duet* (H.M.V.), Caruso and Galski; *A te, O cara amor Talora* (H.M.V.), Fleta.

The "Exhibition" type soundbox was used almost entirely throughout the evening, the members being generally agreed that the reproduction from this design is more suited to the acoustics of our meeting room than, for instance, the "Seymour Superphone" box kindly brought by Mr. E. M. Brockway. An error of speed spoilt the first programme, which programme was modestly intended to gain effect by novelty, but, alas, not that kind of novelty!

Our next meeting will occur on July 28th, when the programmes will be furnished by Messrs. Burros, Wilton and Desmonde.

Before concluding, perhaps I should further distribute the information so generously imparted by a hon. member, viz., that

a "Columbia" 10-in. dance record is free for the asking, from "Gramophone" Department, Messrs. J. Lyons & Co., Ltd., 61, Fleet Street, E.C.4. No, there's no catch in it. Just send a post card.

HERBERT R. PARSONS, Hon. Recording Secretary.

## LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

THE activities of the Liverpool Society for the season 1922-23 were brought to a conclusion with the meeting held on Wednesday, May 30th, when Mr. A. Morrey presented a programme of a varied and acceptable but, generally speaking, light nature.

An interesting item, not previously heard at our meetings, was Svendsen's *Carnival of Paris*, a melodious and well-contrasted composition, in parts reminiscent of other and better known works founded on similar themes. Caruso in *Danza la Tarentelle* (Rossini) sings, in light-hearted fashion, a rather jolly and unusual little song, and the regretful thought of his passing was tempered by the comforting reflection that in his records his golden voice may still charm and console us. In *Vittoria, Vittoria* (Carissimi), Battistini has not a song worthy of his artistry and capacities. A record of merit and appeal is that of *The Jewels of the Madonna*, by the London Symphony Orchestra (Columbia). Delicately and cleverly scored and seductively tuneful, the work cannot fail to give delight, whilst the finished performance of the London Symphony Orchestra and the excellence of the recording should satisfy the most exacting taste.

In the opinion of the writer the meeting was marred somewhat by the redundancy of sound-boxes. It is no doubt fitting and proper that several sound-boxes of relative suitabilities to the different types of records should be introduced for obtaining the best effects, but to present a numerous and confusing array of previously unfired sound-boxes is surely "wasteful and ridiculous excess." The member responsible for the programme, and whose records are to be played, should be the best judge of the matter. Having, after due consideration, selected one or two boxes appropriate to the occasion, he should trust to his own matured judgment rather than submit to proffered suggestions, well-meant, but less well-founded, and should refuse to be swayed by any eleventh hour indecision as to the wisdom and correctness of his arrangements.

It is not to be presumed, however, that Mr. Morrey failed to provide an agreeable evening for the concluding meeting of the session. On the contrary, his efforts merited, and were accorded, the appreciation of a well-pleased audience.

J. W. HARWOOD, Recording Secretary.

## SHEFFIELD GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

OUR June meeting was held at headquarters on the 5th, and a programme of all-round merit was submitted by one of our members, Mr. F. Simpson. The fourteen items included embraced a very fine selection of records, notable amongst which were *Comin' through the Rye* (Alma Gluck), *A Vucchella* (Caruso), Dittersdorf's *Quartet in G Major* (Elman String Quartet), *L'eclat de Rire* (Galli-Curci), *The Prison Scene from Faust* (Caruso, Farrer and Journet), *The Dance of the Goblins* (Heifetz), etc., etc. *The Song of the Flea*, sung by Charles Tree, was also rendered, and it was interesting to compare his interpretation with that of Chaliapin. The record of Heifetz was, in the writer's opinion, quite one of this great artist's best, displaying his capabilities to the utmost. He negotiates the most difficult passages with marvellous ease, leaving one with the impression that all the violin music available is too easy for Heifetz. At the conclusion of the concert, a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Simpson was proposed and duly carried, after which the usual competition was held. Humorous records only were eligible on this occasion and, as can well be imagined, we listened to many of the items with broad smiles. Mr. Scott was successful with *The Parson addresses his flock*, and a very breezy record it was. The remainder of the time at our disposal was occupied in hearing the latest H.M.V. issues, which were thoroughly enjoyed. We still have room for more members, and those gramophonists who have not yet joined our ranks are cordially invited to come along to one of our meetings, which we hold on the first Tuesday in every month.

THOS. H. BROOKS, Hon. Recording Secretary.



## A DECCA ROMANCE

THE Decca arrived with half-a-dozen records while the battalion was in reserve billets at Bouzincourt, near Albert, in January, 1917, and from that moment life in the headquarters' mess was altered. Our beloved colonel, the famous "B. B.," was not musical; in fact, I doubt if he had ever heard a gramophone before, on purpose; but he was quickly converted to the Decca, and in his autocratic way began to insist on hearing his favourite records every evening, till our music became as much a matter of routine as the evening reports from the orderly room or the last whisky and soda before bedtime. I have still got one of the original batch of records, *Where My Caravan has Rested* and *A Little Love, a Little Kiss*, played by Miss Elsie Southgate "and her sister Dorothy," and it is now so worn as to be unplayable. But what a quantity of honest pleasure that Zonophone record has given! I wish Miss Southgate and her sister could have seen us sitting in one of those incredible billets and sopping up the sugary melodies with shameless delight. I say shameless because I have an idea that the War Lord, who was our second in command, never allowed himself to surrender his better judgment to the lure of this particular record. He was a bit of a Wagnerian, and had a real big gramophone at home, and cabinets full of records, so that if he had had his way our repertory would have verged on the austere; but "B. B." and I were inclined to turn the ear to false gods, and the doctor, as might be expected, was a confirmed heretic, and used to come back from leave with a bundle of musical comedy songs, a selection from *Some* or Harry Tate *Fortifying the Home* or a De Groot novelty; and before the mess came to an end the War Lord's taste had been noticeably broadened. We all knew the Harry Tate by heart, except for one phrase which to this very day has baffled me; we had George Robey quips on the tips of our tongues always; we all—especially the doctor—loved Lee White; and we wore out Violet Loraine with our adoration.

Naturally the transport difficulties increased as the months passed. No one went on leave without bringing back records, we ordered a good many by post, and we never had the heart to get rid of any; but on the contrary we "made" a large pile of rather indifferent ones which some other battalion had been forced to dump in a billet that we took over. The Decca was a serious addition to the load of the mess cart, but it was not long before we acquired a signalling pannier—in ordinary language a large clothes basket—which carried gramophone and records with discretion, and whenever we came

out of the front line, at two, three or four o'clock in the morning, we had to hear *Let the Great Big World keep turning*, or the *Tristan Liebestod* (which, oddly enough, was one of "B. B.'s" favourites), or the *Kreutzer Sonata*—those gorgeous records of Miss Hayward and Miss Bourne—or a particularly jolly bit of restaurant music called *Dandy*, which was in a batch of Pathé records that I had brought back from Paris leave, or something similar, that seemed to suit our mood of relief and exhaustion, before we turned into bed.

Strange homes that old Decca has had, up and down the villages of France, in ruined houses, in huts, in tents, in transport lines. Only once, I think, did it get as far forward as the support line, and that was in the Dyke Valley, in front of Courcellette, during the same tour in which—a memorable disaster—the War Lord beat me at chess. But it was always waiting for us, with our kit and baths and pyjamas, to welcome us back to the semblance of a civilised life. Events moved on, "B. B." got a brigade, the battalion was disbanded just before the March retreat in 1918, and somehow or other the Decca, by a process of elimination, followed my fortunes. The pannier had to be given up, but a magnificent artillery ammunition box was fitted up and painted for it—which is now in the stables at home—and in this the barely portable hero of a thousand nights made the advance through Belgium into Germany, and had the privilege of playing *Where My Caravan has Rested* in the parlour of a house in Duren. This was to enjoy the sweets of victory, but not without a sadness, a desiderium.

Four years have passed since those days, during which the Decca has continued to entertain, with a slightly diminished appreciation, a home circle that respected its history but wanted something larger and younger. The time had come when it had earned a pension. The last record that it played for me was, fitly enough, the royal record of the Empire Day speeches, and, as a swan-song, it was frankly a failure. Reluctantly I saw a new gramophone installed in its place. But its life of unobtrusive well-doing was not by any means ended! It was put up for a raffle in the village, and no less a sum than five pounds was raised for the Benevolent Fund of the battalion's Old Comrades' Association, while the man who won it for one shilling is not grumbling at his bargain. Long may it flourish in its new home!

I wonder if any other war gramophone can claim as good a record?

C. R. S.



## The Second Wagner Supplement of His Master's Voice

I HAD just finished playing the first record from *Siegfried*, and I had been completely carried away by the magnificence of Mr. Tudor Davies' performance, and by the marvellous recording. I had risen from my seat to change the needle and turn the record, when at the very end an attenuated voice like the voice of one of Virgil's ghosts murmured, "He's on the wrong side." I jumped back in alarm from the instrument and remembered how confidently in the first number of THE GRAMOPHONE I had proclaimed my conviction that the time had come when Wagner's position was unassailable. What ghostly voice rebuked me? I thought of many famous dead musicians, but I could not believe that this so clearly English voice belonged to Beethoven or to Mozart, or even to Handel. Then I remembered that it was the tercentenary of William Byrd; and for a moment or two I played with the notion that William Byrd was celebrating his own tercentenary by uttering a ghostly judgment upon a successor whose tercentenary will not be celebrated till you, my readers, and I have long, long been dust. I started the record all over again, and once again I was thrilled by the clank of the anvil, by Mr. Tudor Davies' resonant drama, and by the superb confidence of Mr. Albert Coates' conducting. Once more, when the song was over, I rose from my seat to turn the record, and once more, when my hand was almost upon the sound-box, that ghostly voice muttered, "He's on the wrong side." On the wrong side of what, I asked myself, of what infernal river, Lethe or Styx or Phlegethon was Wagner immured deep in the hopeless dungeons of Dis, while William Byrd chatted amiably with Purcell and Bach in Elysium? Or was that voice the voice of some dead critic who had damned Wagner on earth when he first heard his music and who was now commenting cynically upon my enthusiasm while he gloated on the spectacle of the musical Colossus discredited in eternity? Once more I played the record, and once more I was thrilled, and once more the mocking voice rebuked me, so that I felt inclined to take back what I had written in the first number of THE GRAMOPHONE and ask if Wagner's position really was as unassailable as I thought, and if really it would not have been better for music if he had never lived. I played through the rest of the *Siegfried* records without any more ghostly jeers; but my confidence had been severely shaken. I said to myself, "Yes, this is very wonderful, but is *Siegfried* anything more than a super-pantomime?" I listened to Clarence Whitehill's voice being gradually overwhelmed by

the accompaniment. I asked myself if Florence Austral was singing or screaming, and if the master, in trying to achieve such orchestral effects as no other composer has achieved before or since, had not in the end only succeeded in creating a noise like a thousand tom-toms, above which could faintly be heard a noise of wild beasts seeking their prey and quarrelling over the carcasses. In other words, was I or was I not on the wrong side? And really I do not know. It is clear to me that none of Wagner's successors has added anything to what Wagner himself achieved; but this is not necessarily to condemn Wagner. His music was representational, because he was trying to enlarge the scope of opera. He did not write some silly little solo for the bass flute and call it *An Old Woman Buying a Petticoat*. After all, granted the subjects to which he was trying to give musical expression, did he not go as near as it is possible for mortal man to go in giving them perfect expression? These giants, dwarfs, and dragons really are endowed by his music with a life of their own. When Nietzsche took *Carmen* as the perfect opera, I believe that Nietzsche was right; but Wagner could retort that his subject was not a hard-hearted young cigarette-maker, a weak young soldier, and a lusty toreador. Personally, I believe that opera is fundamentally a ridiculous art form, and I should say that when it tries to be something more than Bizet made it in *Carmen* or Verdi in *Traviata* it goes beyond what opera can hope to achieve. What I should like to do is to take all the singing out of Wagner's operas, or, if it were left in, to instruct the singers to consider themselves additional instruments to the orchestra. In Mr. Bliss' attractive *Rout* (H.M.V. D.574) the soprano is used as an instrument to utter a series of melodious screams, and in uttering those screams she is every bit as intelligible as any of our singers performing Wagner's operas in English.

I read the other day an outburst by Mr. Robert Radford against opera in German, French, and Italian. But, my dear Mr. Radford, when you sing Wagner in English I do not distinguish more than one word in twenty. This argument about English opera has been going on ever since that old prig Addison laughed at the idea of English people attending the performance of an opera by Handel in Italian. I do not care if Wagner be sung in German or English, for the words are an outrage on either language. But you English singers must abandon the vanity that leads you to suppose that you are intelligible in your own language. You are not, and until you have first of all learned to make

yourselves intelligible in Italian you never will be. Why are McCormack and Hislop and Edward Johnson so effective in their own language? Because they have learned to sing in Italian and still know how to sing well in Italian. But most of you swallow your words. Most of you have plums in your gullets and cotton-wool in your noses. Most of you are self-conscious and awkward. Most of your acting is like the acting at a parish entertainment. The public does *not* want opera in English. It never has and it never will, until it gets an English opera written by an Englishman who knows how to write, composed by an Englishman who knows how to compose, and sung by English singers who know how to act and how to sing. That was the success of *The Beggar's Opera*. I apologise for so much spleen; but the exaggeration of the supporters of opera in English drives one into counter-exaggeration. I do sincerely admire Mr. Davies and Miss Austral in

Wagner whether they sing in English or in German; but I was horrified by their singing of *Adelaide* and *Ritorna Vincitor*, and I did realize then how infinitely far both of them are from really knowing how to sing as distinct from knowing how to hold their own with an orchestra. Yet they are both splendid in this second Wagnerian supplement. Mr. Radford, too, is much more effective as Hagen than he was as Wotan. Clarence Whitehill is not so good in the second supplement as he was in the first.

The second series as a feat of recording is perhaps even more wonderful. I have no superlatives left. But the music itself . . . I wonder, I wonder if art would have been better if Wagner had never lived. I wonder if the ghost of William Byrd is right. However, speculation about the past is as vain as speculation about the future. And no ghost shall frighten me out of my enjoyment. Z.

## Suggestions for Gramophone Societies

*In reference to Mr. Wm. J. Rogers' interesting article on "How to Start a Gramophone Society," which appeared in our first issue, we have received the following suggestions from a correspondent, which we are glad to publish, in the hope that they will be of service in the development of the Gramophone Society movement.*

### 1.—AUCTION SALE OF RECORDS.

Most gramophone owners have records that have ceased to charm, though quite pleasing to hear a few times. The gems of a collection are, of course, a never-failing delight, but there are many records that soon lose their hold on us. It is easy to suggest an exchange with friends who are in a similar case, but in practice this does not work out very well. The discs we are tired of may not happen to appeal to the other man at all, or the condition of the record as well as the original price may vary so much that it is difficult to find a basis of exchange.

The remedy for this is an auction sale of records, which can be arranged by any enterprising society secretary. Each member who wishes to sell brings some records and a list giving his reserve price for them.

The discs are put up for sale one at a time, each being played over first, so that all may hear. No eloquence on the part of the auctioneer is needed as the music speaks for itself. Of course, a percentage will fail to reach the reserve price, but the owner can always try again at a subsequent sale, and it is surprising how a record that at first sounds uninteresting will reveal its charms at a second hearing.

We have all met the man who has lost interest in

his gramophone because he cannot afford to buy new records. Under this system, when buying he also sells, and can thus vary his collection with very little expense. Incidentally, he will become keen again and will probably buy new records at the first opportunity.

### 2.—A RECORD CLUB.

A club run on the following lines will be found useful, particularly in cases where there is no record library available:

Each member chooses six records (or any number agreed upon), and the selections thus formed are passed on to all the members in rotation. The best plan is for the society secretary to buy the records—having collected the subscriptions—and to rearrange the parcels, if necessary, in order to ensure a varied assortment in each.

If the membership is large enough, there should be two sections: (a) for those willing to buy 7/6 records; (b) for those who prefer to get cheaper ones, say, 3/6 to 5/6. There might be a third section for dance music if required. The parcels are numbered and issued to members, and are exchanged at the monthly meeting, the person bringing No. 1 taking No. 2, and so on.

If it is desired to have the club only in the winter months, each section is limited to seven members, or two groups with seven in each. In that case the club is open from October 1st to April 30th. After circulation, the records can be used to start a society library, free to club members but available to others by subscription. Such a library will in time attain considerable proportions. E. D. M.



# REVIEW OF RECORDS

## THE SECOND WAGNER SUPPLEMENT OF HIS MASTER'S VOICE.

### "SIEGFRIED."

12-inch Double-sided Black Label, 7s. 6d. each.

- D.700.—**Siegfried Forges the Broken Sword: Finale Act 1.** Vocalist: Tudor Davies. Conductor: Albert Coates. **Mime's Treachery to Siegfried: Act 2.** Vocalists: Tudor Davies, Sydney Russell, Florence Austral. Conductor: Eugene Goossens.
- D.701.—**Siegfried Follows the Forest Bird: Finale Act 2.** Vocalists: Tudor Davies, Bessie Jones. Conductor: Albert Coates. **Brunnhilde Hails the Radiant Sun: Act 3.** Vocalists: Florence Austral, Tudor Davies. Conductor: Percy Pitt.
- D.702.—**Brunnhilde Recalls Her Valkyrie Days: Act 3.** Vocalists: Florence Austral, Tudor Davies. Conductor: Albert Coates. **Brunnhilde Yields to Siegfried: Finale of Opera.** Vocalists: Florence Austral, Tudor Davies. Conductor: Albert Coates.

12-inch Red Label, 7s. 6d. each.

- 3-0783.—**Introduction: Wotan Invokes Erda: Act 3.** Vocalist: Clarence Whitehill. Conductor: Albert Coates.
- 3-0779.—**Siegfried's Ascent to the Valkyrie Rock: Act 3.** Vocalists: Clarence Whitehill, Tudor Davies. Conductor: Albert Coates.

### "THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS."

- D.703.—**The Parting of Brunnhilde and Siegfried (Prologue): Part 1.** Vocalists: Florence Austral, Tudor Davies. Conductor: Albert Coates. **The Parting of Brunnhilde and Siegfried (Prologue): Part 2.** Vocalists: Florence Austral, Tudor Davies. Conductor: Albert Coates.
- D.704.—**Hagen Meditates Revenge: Act 1.** Vocalist: Robert Radford. Conductor: Percy Pitt. **Gunther and Gutrun Welcome Siegfried: Act 1.** Vocalists: Tudor Davies, Robert Radford, Bessie Jones. Conductor: Albert Coates.
- D.705.—**Prelude: The Rhinemaidens Scene: Act 3.** Conductor: Eugene Goossens. **Brunnhilde Kindles the Funeral Pyre: Finale of Opera: Part 1.** Vocalist: Florence Austral. Conductor: Albert Coates.
- D.706.—**Brunnhilde Kindles the Funeral Pyre: Finale of Opera: Part 2.** Vocalist: Florence Austral. Conductor: Albert Coates. **Brunnhilde Kindles the Funeral Pyre: Finale of Opera: Part 3.** Vocalist: Florence Austral. Conductor: Albert Coates.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.—WILLIAM BYRD SUPPLEMENT.—E.290.—The English Singers: Agnus Dei, Kyrie Eleison and Sanctus. E.291.—The English Singers: Gloria from Nunc Dimittis from "Great Service"; Magnificat from "Short Service." E.292.—The English Singers: This Sweet and Merry Month of May; Though Amaryllis Dance. E.293.—Byrd String Quartet: Fantasia for String Sextet. E.294.—Violet Gordon Woodhouse: The Earl of Oxford's March; The Queen's Alman. E.295.—Violet Gordon Woodhouse: Rowland; Galliard. D.710.—The English Singers: Praise our Lord; Exsurge Domine. D.711.—The English Singers: Turn our Captivity; Come to me Grief for Ever and Why do I use my Paper, Ink and Pen?**

The William Byrd supplement and the second Wagner supplement of His Master's Voice have been dealt with in separate articles.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.—3-07964.—Heifetz (Violin): Rondo (Mozart-Kreisler).**

The Mozart-Kreisler Rondo is well adapted to showing off Heifetz's special qualities. It is a charming trifle, and he plays it perfectly. Occasionally he has to ascend too near the limit of sounds inaudible to the gramophone, and then there is a sudden and unnatural falling off of tone. This is a malady which no recording expert has entirely cured and it is perhaps the greatest obstacle to the perfect reproduction of the violin tone which, but for that, would be almost the most life-like of all.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.—D.697, D.698.—De Greef (Piano) and The Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, conducted by Sir Landon Ronald: Variations symphoniques (César Franck).**

This is the first time, so far as I know, that these enchanting variations have been recorded. They are exquisite records of one of César Franck's most beautiful works, and their publication is a proper tribute to the memory of a master whose centenary has just been celebrated.

**VOCALION.—R.6113.—Amadio (Flute). Scherzo capriccio (Sabathil); Birds in the wood (Doppler).**

The reproduction of the flute tone on the gramophone is extremely faithful, and although I cannot say that I like the rather reedy quality of the low notes of the Boehm flute, I have to confess that most flautists, and above all most English flautists, do produce that tone. The fact is that with the mechanical improvements introduced into the instrument by Boehm there came also a loss of the peculiar sweetness which was at its greatest perfection in the one-keyed conical flute of the earlier eighteenth century. Certain modern French players on the Boehm flute are able to retain some of this sweetness, but the English school aims at a robustness which I must continue to think not characteristic of the instrument. Mr. Amadio is a very brilliant flautist, and the pieces he chooses to play are invariably pieces giving plenty of opportunity for the display of his brilliance. The flute has, if possible, suffered on the gramophone more from this tendency to virtuosity than even the violin, and the beautiful things written for the instrument by Bach, Handel, Leclair, Gluck and many other writers are neglected in favour of the innumerable variations and concert pieces written by amateur composers but professional acrobats. The present record is the best I have heard of Mr. Amadio's playing and the two pieces scarcely deserve to have such hard things said of them, indeed the piece by Doppler, though it has not the poignant beauty of his *Fantaisie Pastorale*, has a certain charm of its own.

**ACTUELLE.—15129.—Fanny Heldy (Soprano): Quel trouble from La Traviata (Verdi).**

A double-sided record of the aria usually known in its two parts as "Ah fors'è lui" and "Sempre libera deggio folleggiare," sung in French. This is one of the very best renderings of this favourite aria, and it has the advantage of having both parts on one double-sided record instead of on two single-sided ones, as is unfortunately the case with every other good version of it that I am acquainted with. The practice of putting "celebrities" on single-sided records is surely an absurd one and one which will have to go. It has, so far as I can see, almost nothing in its favour from the public's point of view. The Pathé company are to be congratulated for producing a double-sided record of celebrity standard at a reasonable price, and the public can strongly be recommended to buy it. I should, I confess, have thought it even more desirable had it been sung in Italian, but perhaps I ask too much.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.—D.695.—Florence Austral (Soprano): Return victorious! (Ritorna vincitore!) from "Aida" (Verdi); Ah! Suicide! (Suicidio!) from La Gioconda (Ponchielli).**

Florence Austral is a gifted singer with a particularly strong feeling for Wagner. The decidedly Wagnerian sound of both Verdi and Ponchielli on this record may perhaps be accounted for by her method of production, which gives her voice a certain strained quality suggesting strings too tightly stretched. This quality is apt to appear in all "Central-European" voices, as my colleague "Z" calls them. It may be heard alike in singers so different as Frieda Hempel, Elena Gerhardt and Selma Kurz, and should be distinguished on the one hand from the English hoot and on the other from the beautiful roundness and openness of the perfect Italian voice. This method is probably the only one thoroughly suitable to Wagner and to German *lieder*, and it is no doubt due to Miss Austral's Wagnerian proclivities that her voice possesses these Central-European qualities. I find Miss Austral less successful in Verdi and Ponchielli than in her Wagnerian numbers. She sings, it would appear, in English, but there seems, as usual, hardly any object in this, since not more than a word or two now and then is distinguishable. The recording is excellent.



**VOCALION.**—C.01094.—Gerhardt (Soprano). *Feldeinsamkeit* (Brahms).

We had high expectations of a record of Mme. Gerhardt singing one of Brahms' most beautiful songs, and these expectations have not been disappointed. All who care for *lieder* should get this record in which the same qualities are shown as were shown in her record of Schumann's *Nussbaum*, reviewed last month.

**COLUMBIA.**—L.1452.—Murdoch (Piano). *Arabesque in G* (Debussy); *Londonderry Air* (Arr. Evanger).

The reproduction of the piano tone in this record is exceptionally faithful. The end of the *Arabesque* was marked by a series of what I took at first to be terrible blasts, but after playing a few times with a fine needle followed by fibre and careful brushing they disappeared even to the last traces. The *Arabesque* is an early and not very Debussyish work, the *Londonderry Air* we all know. It is a beautiful tune but haven't we heard it almost too often?

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—De Luca, Mardones, Martinelli (Baritone, Bass, Tenor). *Troncar suoi di quell'empio* from "Guglielmo Tell" (Rossini).

There are very few records available of anything from *William Tell* except the overture, and we should be grateful for this beautiful trio, which is admirably sung and recorded.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-022018.—Chaliapin (Bass). *Pimen's monologue* from "Boris Godounov" (Moussorgsky).

A very good record of one of the numbers from Moussorgsky's great opera, which are the things that show Chaliapin's temperament best. This is an excellent example of his singing. I may perhaps say that the particular H.M.V. "scratch" (every firm has its own peculiar "scratch") is rather more prominent than usual on this record. It consists of a rather even and not disagreeable rasping sound unpleasantly diversified by occasional jolts, as though grit had got into a smoothly running motor. On examination of the record I found a number of what I take to be very small air bubbles which are evidently partly the cause of it. Apart from this the record is up to the high standard of recent H.M.V. recording.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—7-52234.—Caruso (Tenor). *Nina* (*Tre giorni*) ("Pergolesi").

It has long been known that this song was not written by Pergolesi and was never meant to be sung tragically, but it still remains the one piece of music that most people connect with the name Pergolesi, and it is always sung as if the singer had been driven melancholy mad by the death of his mistress. It is a charming song with a taking and individual tune and I should like to hear it simply and light-heartedly sung for what it is, with all the "sob-stuff" cut right out. Caruso gives us the usual rendering with that heart-broken sob of his we know so well. Even neglecting the question of what the song means, I would not put this record very high among the Caruso records.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—5-7957.—Helfetz (Violin). *Serenade, Op. 4* (d'Ambrosio).

It will not be the fault of the recording companies if the music critic at a concert ever has any difficulty in identifying a violinist's encores. So far as the violin is concerned the gramophone appears to exist for hardly anything except to reproduce such pieces. As a music critic I may be grateful, but as a member of the public I must deplore this tendency. D'Ambrosio's *Serenade* is an agreeable piece of the kind, very neatly played and well recorded.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—043181.—Selma Kurz (Soprano). *Lockruf* from *Die Königin von Saba* (Goldmark).

An unfamiliar song of strange and haunting beauty. I had not the score or a libretto so do not know what it was about. It suggests a shepherd piping a wandering and infinitely sorrowful tune on the hill-side of some legendary country—Shemakha or East of the Sun and West of the Moon. Mlle. Kurz's voice with its curious strangled sound has the aloofness of an instrument and an instrument's agility. I can hardly imagine a better evocation of the song's peculiar atmosphere.

**ACTUELLE.**—15132.—Borgatti (Tenor). *Mon cygne aimé* from "Lohengrin" (Wagner).

This record produces on me the impression that it was made long ago and only just issued. It has the characteristic shortcomings of pre-war records. Not knowing, I should have guessed it to be an unsuccessful early effort of the Fonotipia company. It is a pity that it is not better, as a double-sided record of the

*Swan Song* from *Lohengrin* was desirable and Borgatti at one time was just the man to choose for doing it. The song by the way is originally German and is here sung in Italian, so that, for the English market at least, it seems unnecessarily complicating matters to put the title in French.

**COLUMBIA.**—L.1478.—The New Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by Sir Henry Wood. *Overture—Fingal's cave* from "The Hebrides" (Mendelssohn).

This is the best record I have heard of this overture, and I venture to express a not very confident hope that the other great recording companies will not now think it due to their dignity or their shareholders to publish rival versions. It is extremely improbable that they will succeed for some time to come in producing a version as good as this one, which represents the high-water mark of modern technique and should be accepted as the standard record. There are plenty of suitable pieces of classical music of which no quite first-rate records exist, and by the time that all these pieces have been recorded the technique will probably have so much improved as to justify doing them all again. The overture is one of Mendelssohn's happiest efforts and is a piece of music that appeals to almost everyone.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-032073.—Anseau (Tenor). *Vois ma misère, hélas!* (*Air de la meule*) from "Sanson et Dalila" (Saint Saëns).

Some time ago I noticed in a French catalogue that *Che farò* from Gluck's *Orfée* sung by M. Anseau had just been issued. I have been hoping ever since to see it in the English H.M.V. catalogue. I cannot feel compensated by this song from that (to me) detestable opera *Sanson et Dalila*. M. Anseau has a very beautiful high tenor voice and I feel sure that his record of *Che farò* is a treasure. In the meantime *Vois ma misère* can be recommended to lovers of Saint Saëns.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-052232.—Hislop (Tenor). *Che gelida manina* from "La Bohème" (Puccini).

Almost every tenor sings this number and most collectors of records will possess one version or another of it. Mr. Hislop's rendering is among the best. He is a delightful singer in the Italian style and his articulation is exceptionally good.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—D.708, D.709.—Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Albert Coates. *Ma mère l'oie* (Ravel).

The Vocalion records of the Mother Goose suite published some years ago are extremely good; indeed the orchestral records of that company made with a small orchestra are I think unsurpassed for the music of Ravel and Debussy. The Vocalion version of *L'après-midi d'un faune* is far the best in existence. The new recording of the Mother Goose suite conducted by Mr. Coates is extremely good too, and it has a movement *Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête* which is not in the Vocalion version, and for which we have reason to be grateful. This music of Ravel's which sounds so strange when first you hear it, grows on you wonderfully. It is a civilised and polite music, reticent of its charms but full of delights for those who will take the trouble to listen.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—7-33059.—Galli-Curci (Soprano). *Chanson hindoue* from "Sadko" (Rimsky-Korsakov).

No soprano has ever made me understand so well as Mme. Galli-Curci how a prima donna could come to be called "diva," and my piety is such that it goes to my heart to admit that a mere mortal like Mme. Alma Gluck can ever do better than a goddess, yet there is no doubt that her record (H.M.V. 7-33006) of this song is superior to the present one. The *Chanson Hindoue* of which most of us are heartily tired, needs singing with a certain variety of quality in the voice, and the celestial monotony of Mme. Galli-Curci's voice does not suit it. I should not put it higher than Class 3 of her records (see the article on her by "J" in No. 2 of The Gramophone). The year 1923 has not been a very good Galli-Curci year, seven months have gone and only two records of her voice issued and those two of the third class.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—7-52236.—Fleta (Tenor). *A te o cara* from "I Puritani" (Bellini).

Another beautiful record by Sen. Fleta, this time of an exquisite and not very easily available aria from "I Puritani." He indulges us in only one *sfumatura*, a very agreeable one, and sings the aria divinely. I know of no living tenor whose voice I like so well, and if I had to say what was my favourite tenor record I am not sure I should not answer, Fleta's *Ay, Ay, Ay*.

JAMES CASKETT.



# OF SOUNDBOXES AND NEEDLES

LET me confess that I have never made a soundbox, or helped to make one—never even coiled in a gasket! I have but availed myself of others' mechanical brains and pounced upon their best results. A good soundbox is a joy for ever!

Steel needleites read no further; I use fibre needles only. Those who live in Baronial Halls, read no more, for I do not live in a Baronial Hall, and in my small "New Poor" dwelling I find steel needles over loud and the metallic tone too audible.

*De gustibus non est disputandum*, I prefer soundboxes of large diameter, with the resulting broad mellow tone and mitigation of surface noise. If on some records they sound "tubby," well, the remedy is obvious—use a smaller soundbox.

The Superphone, Lenthall, Ultone, 3in. Astra, Exhibition with flex diaphragm, and the H.M.V. No. 2 are fine boxes. I have other good ones, but I use them seldom.

I find the Superphone far and away the best with

female voices, and when a full tone is required for an orchestral record, nothing comes up to it.

For powerful male voices such as Caruso, Zanelli, Amato, Sagi-Barba, Navarro, etc., the Ultone soundbox is very good, also H.M.V. No. 2; with English tenors the Lenthall is perfect.

Piano records are difficult to tackle; here again Ultone is good; 3in. Astra also. Of course, the right length of needle is a great factor in getting the best out of your records; try long, medium, and short lengths, and mark the length you decide upon on the envelope of the record, together with the most suitable soundbox; but remember that the atmosphere affects soundboxes, and you may occasionally have to substitute a different box and a different needle length.

I can generally cure a record that persistently takes the point off fibre needles by playing it two or three times over with a steel needle. My last word is—that No soundbox is foolproof; keep them locked up.

"SUSSEX."

## REVIEW OF BOOKS

*The Complete Book of the Great Musicians*, with an introduction. By Sir HUGH P. ALLEN. (12/6 net.)

"Musical Appreciation" in Schools—Why and How? (1/6 net.)

*The Listener's Guide to Music*, with a concert-goer's glossary and an introduction. By Sir W. HENRY HADOW. (5th edition; paper boards, 3/6 net; cloth, 4/- net.)

*The Beginner's Guide to Harmony*. (Paper cover, 2/- net; cloth boards, 2/6 net.)

All the above by PERCY A. SCHOLES, published by the Oxford University Press.

*Learning to Listen by means of the Gramophone*. By PERCY A. SCHOLES, with introduction by Dr. JOHN ADAMS. (The Gramophone Co., Ltd.; 3/- net.)

IT is late in the day to be reviewing these books, for they are all firmly established in the public esteem, and it is unlikely that any of our readers are unacquainted with the valuable work of Mr. Percy Scholes, the musical critic of *The Observer*. But the recent publication of his three volumes of the Great Musicians' series in one volume affords an excuse for a notice, and though the manner in which this has been done is hardly worthy of the Oxford Press, it is to be hoped that a further edition, uniformly printed and consecutively pagged, will soon be required.

For Mr. Scholes has accomplished with notable success a task which is not perhaps so simple as it may appear. He has undertaken to broaden the appreciation of music, to increase the number of people to whom the consolation, the delight and the interest of music may be a real fragrance in their lives; and though, primarily, the appeal of his instruction is to the young—to teach them in the happiest, simplest way how music is made and how it may be listened to and appreciated by almost anyone in whom

the spark of aspiration is fanned, he has written a series of books which are undoubtedly of the greatest value to a large number of us older folk who are ashamed of our ignorance, anxious to be initiated, and able, with his genial help, to open for ourselves an almost completely new outlook upon the occasions when music is made for our benefit. He is always cheerful, often amusing, with a happy knack for saying a thing so trenchantly that it sticks in the memory; and from a wide knowledge and love of music he selects with great skill just the facts and the impressions that will lead his pupils on without boredom or irritation to further wanderings in those attractive fields.

Naturally it is with the last book in the above list that THE GRAMOPHONE is chiefly concerned; and it is a book which should be in every one of our readers' libraries. For though it only covers a small part of the ground, it gives a method of learning to listen to the gramophone which is capable of much further elaboration, and we look to Mr. Scholes to continue his evidently pleasant labours in this direction. It would of course be better for the gramophone user if the records employed for illustration were not confined to the H.M.V. catalogue; but this is rather a compliment to the enterprise of The Gramophone Company than a criticism of Mr. Scholes!

*A Musical Pilgrim's Progress*. By J. D. M. RORKE, with a preface by ERNEST WALKER, D.Mus. (Humphrey Milford; Oxford University Press; 4/6 net.)

THE only pity about this book, from our point of view, is that Mr. Rorke made his pilgrimage with a piano-player instead of a gramophone; but the moral of it for us is perhaps that he could not have explored his ground so thoroughly with the help of the classical music at present available in the form of gramophone records. This is a reflection on the record-makers which it

will always be our object to remove. But at the same time the limitations imposed upon Mr. Rorke by a pilgrimage entirely controlled by piano rolls are formidable, and some day, when he has bought a gramophone and started on a new pilgrimage through the enchanted world of orchestral, vocal and chamber music, we shall expect a no less fascinating account of his enjoyment. For his *Musical Pilgrim's Progress* is fascinating; its candour, its literary flavour, and, above all, the piety and awe of its enthusiasms, have marked the book as an outstanding work of self-revelation, which will interest our readers all the more, because of the similarities and of the contrasts which it exhibits to the musical autobiography of the Editor at present appearing in these pages.

### CORRESPONDENCE

MY GOOD SIR,—Your correspondent "W. B. P." seems a trifle worried by my note in the *Daily Telegraph*, as folk are wont to be when their faults are pointed out to them. Will he come out of his cloudy condition and tell me, "just like that," what Gramophone Societies are for? He seems to answer my question in his first sentence of paragraph 4 of his report of Brixton G.S. on p. 33 of your current issue. But why did he not say as much in the first report? It may interest "W. B. P." to know that several correspondents made enquiries of me on the subject, and all imagined the societies to be private gramophone exchanges!

Please tell "W. B. P." not to be so cross—or at any rate rude. I went very considerably out of my way, if it interests him to know it, to bring him and his "lucubrations" (his phrase, not mine) before a very large public and, I hope, to save them from the W.P.B.

Yours cordially,

ROBIN H. LEGGE.

### A NOTE FOR CORRESPONDENTS.

No letters will in future be answered by post unless a stamped addressed envelope is sent. A selection of other letters will be answered in the columns of the paper.



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